Online Specialty Food Consumers in 2000:

Who They Are and What They Buy

By

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The estimated number of U.S. consumers who made at least one online purchase increased 130% between 1998 and 1999, reaching 39 million people (Ernst & Young). This number is expected to continue to grow as both the number of Internet users and the percentage of online buyers increase over the next four years. eMarketer projects that 101 million people will make an online purchase in 2003, and that 58% of those consumers will be Internet "regular buyers."

Not only are more people shopping online; they are also spending more. Ernst & Young reports that annual U.S. consumer online spending increased from an average of $230 in 1997 to $1,200 in 1999. That, too, is expected to continue to increase as consumers project that they will spend 36% of their "shopping money" online by 2002.

Internet shoppers, however, are not a homogeneous group (Chu et al). To take advantage of the growth in online sales, specialty food retailers need to understand their online audience.

This report is the result of the fourth in a series of surveys intended to describe the population of Internet users who visit food and drink sites online. The first three surveys in this series documented that the demographics of visitors to specialty food and drink sites differed from both the general Internet population and the U.S. population at large (White and Cheng, White 1997, White 1999). However, this population shared many characteristics with traditional retail specialty food shoppers.

This study was intended to examine any changes taking place in the demographic profile of Internet users who visit food-related sites and also to determine the extent to which this population has adopted the Internet as an acceptable medium for purchasing specialty food and beverages. It examines their demographic characteristics and online shopping activity, and identifies subsets of this population most likely to conduct online transactions. For the first time, this study also asked recent online specialty food and beverage consumers why they chose to make their purchases via the Internet. This analysis will be the topic of a subsequent report.

Methodology

The survey was conducted from February 1 – March 7, 2000. As in the three previous studies, the demographic survey was prepared as an Internet document on the University of Maine server. This year, an identical survey instrument was also placed on the Global Gourmet web site.

Individuals were invited to participate in the survey via postings on food and wine-related bulletin boards, newsletters, newsgroups, links on food sites, and direct mailings to registered users of food and drink sites. A list of all known posting locations is provided below. However, there may have been additional notices posted by members of the online food community.

Bulletin Boards

- Bonjour Paris Food Message Board
- Canadian Living Food Forum
- Chatelaine Magazine Food Forum
- CheeseNet
- Eclix Food Bulletin Board
- Gail's Recipe Swap on Epicurious.com
- Kansas City BBQ Forum
- Mark Squires Wine Bulletin Board
- Wine Lovers' Forum
- Wine Spectator Forum
- UK Wine Forum

Direct Email

- Bob's Sugar House
- Cookingindex
- Foodies.com
- Global Gourmet
- MinuteMeals
- Wilbur's Chocolates

Links

- CDKitchen
- CooksRecipes.com

- Firegirl.com
- Global Gourmet

Newsletters

- 30 Second Wine Advisor
- CooksRecipes
- Diabetic Gourmet Magazine
- FoodWeb Newsletter
- Gourmet International/ Cybercucina
- KitchenLink (paid advertisement)
- MinuteMeals
- Recipe Page/ Gourmet Connection
- SCC Kitchen Happenings
- Sam Cooks

Newsgroups/Mailing Lists

- Bakery Shoppe
- Cooking@elists.com.au
- Cooking Smart
- Dailyrecipes.com
- Grans Goodies
- Recipelu

Due to significantly higher industry participation, the respondent population was much larger in 2000 than it was in the previous three surveys. A total of 7,982 valid surveys were received. Surveys were received as e-mail, compiled with Perseus Survey Solutions for the Web, and aggregated in an Excel file for analysis. This procedure was identical to that used in the 1999 survey (White 1999).

Respondent Demographics

Originally dominated by young men, the Internet has now reached gender parity among American users (Harris, Mediamark). The gender of visitors to food and beverage sites, however, continues to differ from the Internet population as a whole (table 1) with approximately 78% female representation. This is statistically unchanged from 1999.

Table 1. Respondents' Gender (Percent of Respondents)

	UMaine Food & Drink Surveys				The Harris Poll	Mediamark CyberStats
	2000 (N=7,824)	1999 (N=665)	1997 (N=167)	1996 (N=244)	December, 1999	Fall 1999
Female	77.7	76.6	53.0	50.4	50	49.2
Male	21.4	22.2	45.2	46.3	50	50.8
Rather Not Say	1.0	1.1	1.8	3.3	N/A	N/A

As in 1999, visitors to specialty food and beverage sites in 2000 were older than the Internet population in general (table 2). The majority of respondents (56.5%) were aged 35 – 54. Approximately 21% were aged 55 or above; 17% were 34 years of age or younger. There was no statistically significant change in respondents' age between 1999 and 2000.

Table 2. Respondents' Age (Percent of Respondents)

	UMaine Food & Drink Surveys				The Harris Poll		Mediamark CyberStats	
Age	2000 (N=7854)	1999 (N=650)	1997 (N=167)	1996 (N=244)	Age	%	Age	%
17 or under	0.4	0.0	0.6	0.4				
18 – 20	1.1	0.8	3.6	0.8				
21 – 24	3.1	2.8	9.0	7.1	18-29	28	18-34	40.4
25 – 34	17.4	17.1	29.3	30.7				
35 – 44	26.9	27.1	22.8	35.3	30 - 39	26	35-54	48.1
45 – 54	29.6	28.9	21.6	18.2	40 – 49	24		
55 – 64	15.8	18.5	9.0	5.0	50 – 64	14	55+	11.5
65+	5.6	4.9	1.8	1.2	65+	6		

As Internet use continues to become more mainstream, the educational level of users is decreasing (CyberAtlas). Among visitors to specialty food sites, the percentage of college graduates has declined with each of the University of Maine studies (table 3). In 1996, approximately two-thirds of survey respondents were college graduates; in 2000 fewer than one-half held a college degree and 14.7%

reported no education beyond high school. Visitors to food sites continue, however, to report higher educational levels than the Internet population as a whole.

Table 3. Highest Education Attained by Respondents (Percent of Respondents)

	UMaine Food & Drink Surveys					The Harris Poll	Mediamark CyberStats
Age	2000 (N=7854)	1999 (N=650)	1997 (N=167)	1996 (N=244)		%	%
Did not graduate high school	1.2	0.5	2.4	1.2			
Graduated high school	13.5	9.0	3.6	6.6	Did not attend college	35	24.9
Some college or 2 year	36.1	33.0	25.7	26.1	Attended college	32	35.5
Graduated college	28.7	29.6	39.5	33.6	Graduated college plus	32	39.6
Advanced degree	19.0	26.6	26.9	31.5			
Rather Not Say	1.5	1.4	1.8	0.8			

Like education, average household income is declining with increased mainstream Internet use. Respondents to the 2000 survey reported slightly lower household incomes than they did in 1999 (table 4), with nearly equal numbers of respondents reporting incomes above and below $55,000.

Table 4. Respondents' Household Income (Percent of Respondents)

	UMaine Food & Drink Surveys				The Harris Poll		Mediamark CyberStats	
	2000 (N=7810)	1999 (N=662)	1997 (N=167)	1996 (N=244)				
Less than $15,000	4.3	3.0	7.8	3.5				
$15,000 - $24,999	7.5	4.4	7.0	6.4	$25K or Less	14		
$25,000 - $34,999	11.9	9.5	12.2	11.4				
$35,000 - $44,999	13.5	11.5	11.3	10.4	$25K - $50K	29		
$45,000 - $54,999	13.5	13.5	11.3	11.9			< $50K	56.4
$55,000 - $64,999	11.1	12.5	15.7	15.4	$50K or More	41	$50K - $75K	20.5
$65,000 - $74,999	10.3	12.1	7.0	10.4				
$75,000 - $99,999	13.1	13.1	12.2	14.0			$75K - $150K	19.3
$100,000 - $149,999	9.6	11.9	15.7	16.4				
More than $150,000	5.4	8.7					$150K or More	3.8
I'd rather not say	27.4	23.7	28.9	17.6				

The vast majority of survey respondents (94.2%) were residents of the United States, and most of the remainder (3.4%) were from Canada. Other respondents were residents of Europe (1.1%), Oceania (0.6%), and other geographic areas (0.7%). This geographical distribution differs greatly from the Internet population as whole, of which North Americans are estimated to comprise 45.0% of the total (NUA). Because the survey was primarily focused on food-related sites in the United States, and because it was available only in English, the survey distributions are assumed to reflect an accurate sample of visitors to American specialty food sites.

The survey also asked U.S. residents to provide their zip code. For the first time, this data was analyzed to determine state and county of residence and classify respondents according to U.S. Census regions and ERS Urban Influence Codes as reported by Ghelfi and Parker. Residents from New England and the Middle Atlantic (table 5) appear to be somewhat over-represented. It is not known whether this is due to survey bias, regional levels of Internet use, or stronger interest in specialty food and beverage content online. Further analysis will be conducted regarding the correlation between urban influence (table 6) and online use of specialty food and beverage sites.

Table 5. U.S. Respondents' Residence by Census Regions (Percent)

Region	UMaine Food and Drink Survey	U.S. Census 7/1/99 Estimate
New England (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT)	8.9	4.9
Middle Atlantic (NY, NY, PA)	16.2	14.1
South Atlantic (DE, DC, FL, GA, MD, NC, SC, VA, WV)	17.1	18.2
East North Central (IL, IN, MI, OH, WI)	15.0	16.3
West North Central (IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD)	6.3	6.9
East South Central (AL, KY, MS, TN)	4.5	6.1
West South Central (AR, LA, OK, TX)	9.4	11.1
Mountain (AZ, CO, ID, MT, NV, NM, UT, WY)	6.2	6.3
Pacific (AK, CA, HI, OR, WA)	16.3	16.1

Table 6. U.S. Respondents' Residence by ERS Urban Influence Codes

Urban Influence Codes	UMaine Food and Drink Survey
1. Metropolitan County – 1 million or more	53.1%
2. Metropolitan County – less than 1 million	31.4%
3. Adjacent to a large metro area and contains all or part of its own city of 10,000 or more	1.2%
4. Adjacent to a large metro area and does not contain any part of a city of 10,000 or more	0.5%
5. Adjacent to a small metro area and contains all or part of its own city of 10,000 or more	3.5%
6. Adjacent to a small metro area and does not contain any part of a city of 10,000 or more	3.8%
7. Not adjacent to a metro area and contains all or part of its own city of 10,000 or more	3.3%
8. Not adjacent to a metro area and contains all or part of its own town of 2,500 to 9,999	2.5%
9. Not adjacent to a metro area and totally rural, does not contain any part of a town of 2,500 or more	0.7%

Internet Use

There was no statistically significant difference between the 1999 and 2000 surveys in the amount of time respondents had been online (table 7). Most respondents reported using the Internet for 1 – 3 years (42.3%) or 4 – 6 years (31.6%). The remainder had been online for 7 years or more (12.1%), 6 – 12 months (9.1%), and less than 6 months (4.9%).

Table 7. Length of Time Online (Percent of Respondents)

	UMaine Food & Drink Surveys	
	2000 (N=7,966)	1999 (N=601)
Less than 6 months	4.9	4.8
6 – 12 months	9.1	9.3
1 – 3 years	42.3	41.9
4 – 6 years	31.6	33.3
7 years or more	12.1	10.6

Many of the trends observed in the 1999 study among new users continued in 2000. The vast majority of respondents who had been online for one year or less were women (85%). Only 32.5% of new users held a college degree – approximately one-half as many of those respondents who had been online for seven or more years. New users were also less likely to work full-time outside the home.

Of those respondents who knew at what speed they generally connected to the Internet, most did so at 56.6 kb/second (59.0%) or higher (15.9%). Of the remainder, 13.1% connected at 28.8 kb/second and 10.6% logged in at 36.6 kb/second. Only 1.4% connect at 14.4 kb/second. However, 44.0% of the respondents who had been online for one year or less did not know their usual connection speed. This compares to 12.8% and 8.2% of those who had been online for 4-6 years or 7+ years, respectively.

Table 8. Internet Connection Speed by Length of Time Online (Percent of Respondents)

	Length of time online					
Primary Connection Speed	Less than 6 months	6 – 12 months	1 – 3 years	4 – 6 years	7 years or more	Total
14.4 Kb/sec	5.6	3.5	1.3	1.3	0.0	1.4
28.8 Kb/sec	12.3	13.0	15.5	12.0	9.4	13.1
33.6 Kb/sec	9.2	6.8	11.7	11.1	8.4	10.6
56 Kb/sec	66.2	69.8	60.9	57.2	51.6	59.0
128 Kb/sec or higher	2.7	6.8	10.6	18.5	30.6	15.9
I don't know *	49.6	41.0	25.7	12.8	8.2	22.1

Internet purchasing activity

The survey obtained information about respondents' recent history of online specialty food and beverage purchases. As in 1999, it also asked about online purchases of other products and services.

A large majority of respondents (81.4%) made at least one purchase of any product over the Internet in the previous six months. This does not represent a statistically significant increase over the 78.9% who bought online in 1999.

The extent to which the population of Internet users who visit food and drink sites has adopted the medium as a shopping channel continues to outpace other Internet users. The 1999 America Online/Roper Starch Cyberstudy reported that 42% of all Internet consumers shopped online (CyberAtlas). eMarketer estimates that 58% of Internet users made one or more online purchases in 1999.

Again this year, online buying was directly related with respondents' length of Internet use. While only 50.3% of respondents online for six months or fewer bought via the Internet, 80.2% of those online 1-3 years made a purchase, and 90.7% of respondents online seven years or more bought online (table 9).

Table 9. Internet Purchases by Length of Time on Internet (Percent of Respondents)

	0-6 months	6-12 months	1-3 years	4-6 years	7+ years
Any Internet purchase in past six months (1999)	51.5	69.0	75.3	87.1	89.7
Any Internet purchase in past six months (2000)	50.3	72.8	80.2	86.7	90.7

In general, respondents who bought online did so infrequently. Most made Internet purchases "less than once each month" (48.0%) or "about once each month" (29.5%) (table 10). Among more frequent shoppers, 16.1% bought online "several times a month," and 6.4% made online purchases at least once each week.

Table 10. Frequency of Online Purchases (Percent of Respondents)

	Less than once each month	About once each month	Several times each month	About once each week	Several times each week	At least once each day
1999	53.9	25.4	15.9	2.4	2.0	0.4
2000	48.0	29.5	16.1	3.9	2.2	0.3

Books were again the most frequent purchase among survey respondents (53.1%). Music CDs/Tapes/Albums and Clothing/Shoes were purchased by significantly more respondents in 2000 (38.6% and 30.2%, respectively). The percentage of respondents who purchased wine online also increased significantly, but this is due in part to the recruitment of participants from wine content sites. Excluding respondents referred from wine sites, 4.3% of the remaining respondents purchased wine online.

Table 11. Products Purchased Online in Previous Six Months (Percent of Respondents)

	2000 (N=7982)	1999 (N=674)
Books	53.1	51.0
Music CDs/Tapes/Albums	38.6	31.3
Computer software/games	28.7	24.3
Clothing/Shoes	30.2	21.5
Travel Arrangements	23.4	19.3
Grocery Items	17.1	18.4
Computer hardware	13.1	12.5
Flowers	12.0	10.1
Investment Choices (e.g., stocks)	7.2	6.8
Banking/Financial Services	8.1	6.4
Wine	5.8	2.8

Note: multiple responses allowed.

Specialty Food Purchases

As in the three previous surveys, respondents were asked about their specialty food and beverage purchases. After rising sharply in 1999, the percentage of respondents who made at least one online specialty food or beverage purchase in the past six months dropped slightly from 30.0% to 25.8% in 2000 (table 12). Respondents who made online purchases, however, did so more often than they did in 1999 (4.4 vs. 3.2 times), and they spent more overall ($244 vs. $134) and on each purchase ($55 vs. $42).

In the 1996 survey, visitors to food and beverage sites were 3.6 times more likely to have made a specialty food purchase by catalog than online. The percentage of respondents who used the two shopping channels is now nearly equal. Nearly 28% of respondents made at least one specialty food or beverage purchase by catalog in the previous six months, and on average they made 4.5 purchases. However, the average amount of their catalog purchases was $30. This is in comparison to $45 in 1999, and is 45% lower than their average online purchase.

The percentage of respondents reporting one or more retail specialty food or beverage purchase remained statistically constant at approximately 84%. The average retail purchase also remained unchanged at $22, but the number of purchases decreased from 16.1 in 1999 to 13.7 in 2000.

Table 12. Specialty Food Purchases in Previous Six Months: Source, Frequency, and Value

	2000 (N=)	1999 (N=633)	1997 (N=167)	1996 (N=244)
Online (% of respondents)	25.8	30.0	12.1	12.3
How many times in last 6 months	4.4	3.2		
Approximate total $	244	134		
Catalog (% of respondents)	27.7	34.1	36.4	44.3
How many times in last 6 months	4.5	3.3		
Approximate total $	134	149		
Retail (% of respondents)	83.9	84.9	93.9	82.8
How many times in last 6 months	13.7	16.1		
Approximate total $	302	350		

Although the percentage of respondents making at least one online specialty food or beverage purchase decreased from 1999 to 2000, the percentage who purchased specific product categories was significantly higher in 23 of the 25 survey categories (table 13). The exceptions were condiments/relishes and sauces (bases, mixes). These, too, were purchased by more respondents in 2000, but the increases were not significant at a 95% confidence level.

Fancy Coffee/Tea/Cocoa and Seasonings (spices, herbs) were again the products most frequently purchased online (14.6% and 13.3%, respectively), although their order was reversed from 1999. Candy/Chocolate and Gourmet Gift Baskets were also purchased by at least 9% of respondents.

Table 13. Online Specialty Food and Beverage Purchases by Product Category (Percent of Respondents)

	2000	1999	1997	1996
Alcoholic Beverages	7.8	3.8	2.3	0.8
Appetizers	5.9	3.1	0.8	0.0
Candy/Chocolate	10.7	5.7	1.5	1.7
Condiments/Relishes	8.2	6.6	0.8	1.6
Dessert Topping	5.2	2.6	0.0	0.4
Desserts	6.9	3.7	1.5	0.4
Fancy Bread (including mixes)	7.6	4.2	0.0	0.4
Fancy Cheese	7.9	4.4	0.8	0.8
Fancy Coffee/Tea/Cocoa	14.6	8.4	0.8	2.2
Fruit Juices/Cider	6.0	3.3	0.0	0.0
Fruits/Vegetables	7.0	3.7	0.0	1.2
Gourmet Gift Baskets	9.4	6.2	2.3	3.3
Ice Cream/Frozen Desserts	5.3	2.6	0.0	0.4
Meats/Game	7.6	3.8	1.5	1.2
Oil/Vinegar/Salad Dressing	8.9	6.2	0.8	0.4
Olives/Pickled Vegetables	6.3	3.1	0.0	0.4
Pasta/Rice/Grain/Cereal	8.5	5.3	0.0	0.4
Premium Snacks (nuts, chips)	7.9	3.5	1.5	0.4
Prepared Entrees	5.7	2.7	0.0	0.4
Preserves (jams, jellies)	7.6	5.1	0.0	0.4
Sauces (bases, mixes)	8.7	6.6	0.0	1.2
Seafood/Fish/Caviar	5.0	2.6	0.8	0.8
Seasonings (spices, herbs)	13.3	10.4	3.8	1.2
Soups/Stocks	7.7	4.8	0.0	0.4
Water/Soft Drinks	5.8	2.7	0.8	0.0

The 2000 survey was the first to ask those respondents who purchased specialty food or beverages online in the last six months where they made their most recent purchase. Approximately 90% of respondents specified one or more companies; 7.5% did not remember where they made their last purchase or could not recall the company's name, and 2.3% did not answer the question. For those respondents who identified more than one company, only the first answer was included in this analysis.

The respondent population identified approximately 619 companies from which they made their most recent online specialty food or drink purchase. This count can not be precise because of misspellings and imprecise company names. Seven companies (Omaha Steaks, Tavolo, Penzey's Spices, Wine.com, Harry and David, and Dean & Deluca) were the source of 24.5% of all purchases (table 14). Ten additional companies (Gevalia, Godiva, Swiss Colony, Williams Sonoma, Dan's Chocolate, Hickory Farms, King Arthur Flour, MotherNature.com, Fulton Street Fish Market, and WholeFoods.com) accounted for an additional 15.1% of respondents' most recent purchases. The remaining 60.4% of responses were distributed across 602 companies. The mean value of the most recent purchase was $61.

Table 14. Source of Most Recent Online Specialty Food or Beverage Purchase (among those respondents who identified their most recent online purchase)

Company	% of Respondents (N=1846)
Omaha Steaks	5.3
Tavolo	4.2
Penzey's Spices	3.9
Wine.com	3.9
Harry & David	2.8
Cooking.com	2.4
Dean & Deluca	2.0
Gevalia	1.8
Godiva	1.8
Swiss Colony	1.7
Williams Sonoma	1.6
Dan's Chocolates	1.5
Hickory Farms	1.5
King Arthur Flour	1.4
MotherNature.com	1.4
Fulton Street Fish Market	1.2
WholeFoods.com	1.2
602 Other companies	60.4

As in 1999, the relationship between length of time on the Internet and purchasing online applied to specialty food and beverages as it did to other products and services. Additionally, those respondents who purchased specialty food and beverages by catalog were more likely than others to have purchased specialty foods online (table 15). This correlation between catalog and online shopping has remained constant through the four surveys (White 1997, 1999).

Table 15. Online Specialty Food and Beverage Purchases by Catalog Purchasing Activity and Length of Time on Internet (Percent of Respondents)

	Bought Specialty Food by Catalog (N=2085)	Did not Buy Specialty Food by Catalog (N=5035)
Less than 6 months	18.2	6.2
6 – 12 months	31.9	14.4
1 – 3 years	35.3	17.9
4 – 6 years	42.0	25.4
7 years or more	53.6	29.4

Respondents were also asked how often they visited food and beverage sites and how often they searched online for recipes (table 16).

In general, respondents were frequent visitors to food and beverage sites, with more than one-half (52.3%) reporting that they do so at least weekly. An additional 23.2% visit food and beverage sites several times each month, and 11.3% visit monthly.

They also searched online for recipes with great regularity. Approximately 46% of respondents searched for recipes at least once a week, and nearly 24% searched several times each month. Only 4.6% never looked for recipes on the Internet, and 25.7% did so once a month or less.

In 1999 there was no direct correlation between frequency of visits to food and drink sites and online specialty food and beverage shopping. This year, however, it does appear that those respondents who visit food and drink sites most frequently are the most likely to have bought online. Further analysis is needed to better understand this relationship.

Table 16. Frequency of Food and Beverage Site Visits and Recipe Searches and Online Purchases

	Visit food and/or beverage sites		Search for recipes online	
	% of Total (N=7932)	% Who Bought Food Online	% of Total (N=7947)	% Who Bought Food Online
Never	3.3	4.6	4.6	18.6
Less than once each month	9.9	14.5	11.8	21.0
About once each month	11.3	21.5	13.9	24.7
Several times each month	23.2	27.0	23.7	26.8
About once each week	12.3	25.5	13.0	25.1
Several times each week	23.7	30.3	22.7	28.7
At least once each day	16.3	32.4	10.4	28.8

Summary

The demographic profile of Internet users who visit food and drink sites online continues to differ from the Internet population as a whole. They are primarily female, middle-aged, and well-educated. Like the greater Internet population, however, education and income levels have declined since 1999 as Internet use becomes more mainstream.

Most survey respondents (81.4%) have made at least one purchase over the Internet, but in general they buy online infrequently. Only 22.5% of those who have bought online do so more than once each month. An additional 29.5% buy online monthly.

Approximately 26% of respondents reported making an average of 4.4 specialty food or beverage purchases online in the previous six months. This represents a decline from the 30% who bought online in the 1999 survey, but the frequency of online purchases, estimated total amount spent, and average single purchase increased in 2000. Fancy Coffee/Tea/Cocoa and Seasonings (spices, herbs) were the product categories most often purchased online.

For the first time, this survey asked online food and beverage buyers the source of their most recent online purchase. While respondents reported purchases from approximately 619 companies, nearly 25%

of their most recent purchases were made from 7 companies. An additional 10 companies accounted for 15% of their most recent purchases. The remaining 60% of purchases were distributed across 602 other companies.

The percentage of respondents who made one or more catalog purchases continued to decline to 28%, nearly equaling the level of online shoppers. Traditional retail shopping continues to be the most common channel used for specialty food and beverage purchases, with 84% of respondents reporting an average of 13.7 purchases in the last six months. However, the mean traditional retail purchase was 60% smaller than the average online purchase.

Consumer willingness to purchase online continues to be directly related with their length of time using the Internet. Nearly 91% of survey respondents who had been online for 7 years or more made an online purchase within the previous six months, compared with 50% of those online for 6 months or less.

Additionally, the correlation between catalog and online shopping found in previous University of Maine research is supported by the data from this survey. Respondents who buy specialty food and beverage products by catalog are approximately twice as likely to buy specialty food online than non-catalog buyers.

In contrast to the 1999 survey results, frequency of visits to specialty food sites and/or frequency of online recipe searches appear to be predictors of actual online purchases. Further study is needed to better understand this relationship.

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